

You can't defeat BN with communal politics
Malaysiakini.com
March 29, 2007
Umar Mukhtar

Wouldn't we like to know how the non-bumiputera voters really feel about the way they are treated? Or whether bumiputera voters really do not mind all the plundering done in their name? Will we ever find out in the Machap by-election as a precursor to the coming general elections?

Manjit Bhatia chose to condemn the Malaysian lot to a hopeless political purgatory - that their true feelings will not be translated into votes because they will forever vote out of fear of civil unrest. LCH, on the hand, advised caution, but with defeatist undertones.

I beg to differ with Manjit, and I would urge LCH to change his elitist mindset.

Many of us who are still in this country by choice or by default, do not have the luxury of armchair commenting our predicament, no matter how big the chip on our shoulders. We deal with the reality of our lives with hopes and efforts - until we get it right. That's how the Australians did it before Australia became the haven that it is now for Manjit.

As for Machap, chances are we will not get the answers to the questions I posed. Not because the voters are afraid, but because the voters are not presented with a coherent choice. And that, Manjit, is the fault of opposition leaders, not the man on the street.

Machap is an example of where communal politics - the bane of our political existence - will be further perpetrated by the very opposition party that screams of a Malaysian Malaysia. DAP will be rolled over by BN, but DAP does not care for as long it can appear as the champions of the Chinese. The racial divide gets more and more cemented. That is no way to build a country for our children.

If DAP leaders choose to be a big fish in a small pond, they will remain so. The last time they tested the waters of a bigger pond, they scampered away because they couldn't get along with other big fish, proving exactly the very point of BN supremacy.

It is not about niching in a fragmented arena. It is about working it out, no matter how impossible it seemed. We do not have the proportional representation system, and this is not likely in the near future. In our first-past-the-post system, BN thrives on the likes of DAP stalwarts. And DAP leaders keep banging their heads against the wall, whining constantly that the wall is in the way.

The challenge to overcome that wall can only be answered with a collective effort to expose communal politics for what it is, and not, like the DAP, perpetuating it. It is the life and soul of corrupt BN politics. Deprive them of it, and BN will die a natural death.

So in mixed-constituency Machap, this time around, it's communal politics all over again. The 38 percent Malay voters will not be voting DAP, for the same reasons as

the Chinese not voting PAS, wishful thinking aside. A majority of the Malays will vote for BN because it is a Malay-led coalition. In such a situation, do they have a choice except abstain?

The million-ringgit question that we all know the answer to is - will Chinese voters overwhelmingly support DAP? Therein lies the folly of DAP's mindless political struggle. In 2004, DAP got a total of 1,285 votes in an electorate where 4,518 Chinese votes were available. That is nothing short of pathetic, considering all of DAP's communal rhetoric. Why is that so?

Manjit and LCH proposed that it is their fear that change might lead to civil strife. I do not think so. Let us have more respect for the voters and their capacity to look out for themselves. I believe that it is because the voters, Malays or Chinese, are not presented with a plausible choice (read: sensible, responsible, exhaustive and inclusive) for political realignment.

How will there ever be one if the opposition is too wrapped up in reactionary and divisive politics themselves – inadvertently giving credence to BN's communal posturing?

It is such a pity that multi-racial PKR is not contesting in Machap where in 1999 it had done better than the DAP in 2004. By PKR not contesting, the voters of Machap are deprived of an opportunity to at least peer beyond the wall and dare visualise a colour-blind Malaysia for their children.

But PKR says it is too busy focusing on the Big One. In the words of the late John Lennon, "life happens when you are busy making other plans..."

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.
Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/65221>